

Trailing the dogwood

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It is a long way from the flowering dogwood and the Atamasco lily in South Carolina to the Pacific dogwood and the mariposa lily in California. The lilies are not essential to the dogwood but the pines of the South and the redwoods of the Northwest are, for the dogwood does not grow in pure stands, as the lumbermen say, but under and among other trees.

One day in April near Summerville, South Carolina, we drove along a road exactly to our liking. We passed through groves of the long-leaf pines to a road bordered by young magnolia trees whose flowers were "just begun to open" our colored driver said, and came to a so-called "island" where there were tall trees whose green tops overshadowed pink clouds of azalea, greenish white foam of fringetree, and snowbanks of dogwood. The level branches of the latter caught the rays of the setting sun as they penetrated the dark woods and made an unforgettable picture.

The flowering dogwood, *Cornus florida*, is found in that portion of the United States bounded by the Great Lakes, Atlantic Ocean from Maine to northern Florida, the Gulf of Mexico as far west as Texas and east of a line drawn from Texas to Iowa, so that it is quite familiar in the central, eastern and southern States.

On the Pacific coast, other species of dogwood are found from California to British Columbia. The Pacific dogwood, *Cornus Nuttallii*, is one of the four species that grow to tree-size. It is taller than *Cornus florida* and sometimes reaches a height of 100 feet, while the eastern tree seldom rises above 40 feet.

In late April and early May in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, the "blossoms on the dogwood unfold their silken wings" and their beauty adorns the woodlands. In Pennsylvania, the dogwood is associated with oaks, elms, maples, shrubby *Cornus* and azaleas to make a lovely natural landscape. When planted on lawns with the pink variety and some evergreens, it rivals the Japanese cherry in attractiveness.

Frances Duncan says "The flowers lift their faces to the sun, without a thought of turning so that the passer-by may have a better look." There is a belief that the fisherman will have

luck if he casts his line when the dogwood is in flower. A poet writes

White dogwood blossoms hold my heart,
But rare pink ones I know,
That make the wonder of this world
Into the heart's deeps go.

White dogwood, ivory beauty rare,
Spreads far its net of dreams,
But where a rosy dogwood tree
Stands by two silver streams

My heart has lingered, lost to all
That makes a world.

Later in the year, *C. florida* leaves blaze with color. Its berries are red. *Cornus* is patriotic, for some of the shrubby species have white and some have blue fruits. In October, a New Jersey woodland of pines towering above dogwoods and edged with red gum-trees and with a carpet of bright huckleberry bushes makes a soul-satisfying sight.

Usually a symmetrical tree with almost horizontal branches, the dogwood can adapt itself to varied habitats. It can be a tree of considerable girth and height, or it can be a crooked, spindly one pushing itself from between boulders and spreading its bloom over the rocks as may be seen on the banks of the upper Delaware River.

There are many species of *Cornus*. Most of them are shrubs. The silky dogwood called Kinnikinnick grows with thickets of witch hazel in Pennsylvania. Kinnikinnick means mixture. Country people in former days mixed the dried leaves and scraped inner bark with tobacco for their pipes.

From the bark of the roots and stems of the Pacific coast dogwood was obtained a bitter extract which was used as a substitute for quinine in fevers. In Edinburgh, an extract from a Scotch dogwood is used in the examination of eyes. The powdered bark may be used as a tooth powder.

The word *Cornus* means horn, the wood is hard, tough, fine and smooth. It is used for shuttles, mallet heads, skewer tips, pulleys, etc. It is high in price because of the limited supply. The common name was given because the hard wood was used

in making dags (same word as dagger) or skewers for holding the meat being roasted before an open fire.

Homer knew the strength of the hard wood and praised the lances made from it. The species he knew was most likely *Cornus mas*. Its fruit was fed to swine. The Basque people believed there was magic in a wand made from a branch of the dogwood tree.

Plutarch tells of the holy cornel tree that was close by the steps where Romulus dwelt in Rome. Romulus threw a dart, the staff of which was made of cornel, with such strength that it struck deep into the ground and grew and "produced a tree of considerable bigness." Posterity worshipped it and it was held sacred. If anyone saw it withering, he made outcry and people would run with pails of water to revive it. When Caius Caesar, they say, was repairing the steps, the laborers dug too close to the roots and the tree died.

The dogwood trail I know best in New Jersey is through woodlands where Indians once lived in wattle huts. My cabin is said to be on the site of the queen's wickiup. Nearby is a stream up which, a few years ago, beavers swam and cut several small trees on the bank. They must have come down the Delaware River to the Rancocas Creek and then to this branch known as Haines Creek. Beyond is a grove of persimmon trees. In the cabin flying squirrels made their winter quarters. At the edge of the wood is beach plum. Did the Indians bring the fruit there and leave the seeds, or is it there as a survival of an old sea-beach? The dogwood grows with holly and sassafras under pines and oaks. In season, one may find azalea, strawberry-bush, moccasin flower, New Jersey tea, sweet fern, and wild grape. When the sun is in the west and shining between the tree trunks, the "ivory trays" of dogwood flowers are lighted up and truly Cotaxon Pines is an alluring place.

In the Yosemite Valley, we saw thickets of dogwood, probably *C. glabrata*, growing in damp places. In the second week of August, we saw more of this on a flat on the way to the Tuolumne grove of big trees. It is associated with acres of blue lupine and red fireweed and was a restful relief after a steep and thrilling climb out of the valley on a rocky, one-way road where we feared the automobile would not safely manage some of the sharp curves as it toiled up the Sierras, for the Sequoias

grow at from six to seven thousand feet altitude. After entering a region where the yellow pine and the sugar pine grew to great size and height, we saw some large white blossoms of *Cornus Nuttalli*. Near them was the mariposa lily, and beyond were the giant redwoods.

The dwarf cornel, the bunch berry, pictures galore! One cannot think of the north woods without it. It grows by the trail, it grows by the rocks, it grows in the woods, it grows singly, it grows in groups—sunshine or shade matters not. It is quite as willing to be shy and delicate as sturdy and strong. So symmetrical in form and arrangement are the bracts and leaves that all have an equal share of sun and air.

On the carriage road up Mt. Washington masses of the dwarf cornel with its bright red berries, and here and there a belated white blossom, grow with the violets, the trailing chiogenes and the wild strawberry by the roadside. On July 20 on Mt. Moat, New Hampshire, we saw specimens of *C. canadensis* with as many as sixteen berries—a real bunch.

The dwarf dogwood resembles the tree dogwood in its ability to associate harmoniously with a wide range of plants east and west, but its range does not extend so far south. We like best to think of it in company with the pink *Linnaea* as we saw them growing in the Selkirk Mountains in British Columbia.

MOORESTOWN, NEW JERSEY